A Proposed Synopsis On

INTERSECTING TRAUMA AND GENDER DYNAMICS

Exploring Suppressed Voices in Anuradha Roy's Literary Landscape and Beyond

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Introduction

Michelle Balaev articulates trauma as the emotional aftermath individuals face following distressing events that upheave their longstanding self-perceptions and societal expectations. He suggests that trauma emerges from an individual's emotional turmoil in response to overwhelming incidents, upending their established sense of identity and societal benchmarks. According to him "*Trauma refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous idea of individual's sense of self and standards by which one evaluates the society*". The academic interest in trauma's cultural implications burgeoned in the 1990s, propelled by a united scholarly endeavor. Cathy Caruth, in "Unclaimed Experience," delves deeper, arguing that the essence of trauma lies not in the immediate aftermath of a distressing event but in its subsequent, unforeseen recurrence that haunts the survivor. According to Caruth, the true locus of trauma is in its initial obscurity and its later, unexpected resurgence in the survivor's life. In her words "*trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's, but rather in the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on*". Trauma often stems from devastating experiences linked to one's ethnicity, race, or sexual identity. Events like the partition of India and the Indian Emergency period stand out as particularly traumatic times in post-independence Indian history, inspiring literary works that delve into the national psyche and societal issues. Moreover, the concept of gender-related trauma has entered the discourse, enriched by insights from history, psychology, anthropology, and literature over recent decades.

In contemporary discourse, there's a renewed focus on addressing gender inequality. Women authors like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and Nayantara Sahgal are celebrated for their portrayal of female characters navigating the trials, subjugation, and dominance within a patriarchal framework. Additionally, voices from the northeast of India, including Arupa Patangia, Rukmini Bhaya Nair, and Irom Sharmila, bring to light the trauma experienced by marginalized groups in an increasingly monolithic and masculinized society, exacerbated by ongoing conflict and militancy. Their narratives foster a new awareness, interrogating female identity and introducing nuanced perspectives to Indian English Fiction. Anuradha Roy, a contemporary novelist, explores various facets of the female psyche, revealing the trauma born from frustration, fear, loneliness, and a disintegration of identity.

This research aims to dissect Anuradha Roy's novels for their portrayal of gender and the nuanced ways in which trauma is masked within fictional accounts. It will also assess the influence of third-world experiences on gender norms and ponder their prospective shifts.

Literature Review

These are some literature reviews that have been done to explore the topic.

In his scholarly thesis titled "*Theme of Isolation in the Novels of Arun Joshi and Anuradha Roy: A Comparative Study (2022)*," Brijesh Chand Upadhyay delves into the nuanced exploration of isolation and its situational adverse effects on individuals' mental and physical well-being, as depicted through the narratives of Joshi and Roy.

In her 2023 research thesis, "*A Psychological Study of the Novels of Anuradha Roy*," Shereen Zaidi delves into profound psychological themes such as loneliness, unfulfilled desires, haunting memories, and sexual abuse, all of which hold significant relevance to modern society.

In his 2023 research thesis, "*Socio-Cultural Analysis of Anuradha Roy's Novels*," Shirsat Fulchand Sugriv explores the social ethos, sociolinguistic characteristics, and cultural subtleties within contemporary Indian society. He delves into how class, love, region, gender, social awareness, and superstitions shape the current Indian societal landscape, offering a detailed exploration of these themes through the lens of Roy's novels.

A book titled *"Women Writing Trauma in the Global South*" by Annemarie Pabel examines modalities of psychological trauma in the selected works by three women writers from the Global South: Aminatta Forna, Isabell Allende, and Anuradha Roy. In particular, it focuses on multilayered and interrelated forms of trauma such as familiar bereavement, sexual abuse, and familiar disintegration.

A research article titled "*Psychological and Physical Dislocation in Anuradha Roy's Sleeping in Jupiter*" by R.Abirami (2020), talks about the traces of rejection, survival, pain, loss of identity, displacement, and loss of innocence in the novel. Here, the exploration of the trauma of childhood sexual abuse is depicted.

A research journal "*Psychological Insights in Anuradha Roy's The Folded Earth*" by Shereen Zaidi (2021), attempts to discover the reality behind the state of mind of the characters, general human tendencies compulsive behavior, psychological blockages, and their possible reason.

A research journal titled "*Hypostases of the Artist in Anuradha Roy's The Earthspinner*" by Christina Nicolae(2022), talks about the multifaced analysis of identity constructive themes and how the act of creation becomes a representation of the self and the artist is contoured as a restless wanderer dreaming of a center.

In the book "*Contemporary Indian English Literature*"(2024) edited by Cecile Sandten/Indrani Karmakar/Oliver von Knebel Doeberitz, chapter 10 talks about gender differences as both structuring and structured by the wide set of social relations.

Saharia Deepshikha in her thesis "*Gender violence and the word a reading of the cultural dynamics in Arupa Patangia Kalitas fiction*" examines gender violence of marginalized women. It also talks about how womanhood is affected by gender power relations in the family, community, and state amidst the socio-political unrest in the villages of Assam.

Research Questions

This study aims specifically to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of gender binary essentialism on individuals across the gender spectrum?
2. What is the extent of potential identities relinquished by a woman due to gender distinctions?
3. In what manners have the expressions of women been suppressed, and what significant effects do these have in the context of trauma studies?
4. How does the pursuit of identity assist in crossing boundaries to surmount traumatic experiences?
5. What psychological conditions of characters lead to the experience of trauma, and how do these contribute to the field of trauma studies?

Research Hypothesis

The novels prominently depict the treatment of a sense of isolation and belonging in modern civilization. These novels carry well the themes of self-isolation, the quest for self, and freedom in present times. In the process of research, it will be my effort to project the works of Anuradha Roy from the perspective of gender trauma. I will aim to examine the manifestations of complex and prolonged experiences of trauma occurring in literature and how literary forms facilitated such

representations. Moreover, the research will seek to break and deconstruct the causes and responses of trauma suffered by individuals or a community at large.

Objectives

1**.** To capture different plural voices in terms of gender trauma in the mentioned fictional narratives.

2. To explore the depiction of women and their psychological suppression in the patriarchal society through the selected novels.

3. To discover how despite the inner trauma and sufferings the concept of realization of self in women is exposed in the novels.

4. To discover how the question of survival paves the way to trauma studies.

5. To depict the changing role of gender boundaries in Indian post-colonial and other literature.

Research Methodology

This study will be grounded in the theoretical constructs of Gender Studies and Trauma Studies to explore the themes in Roy's novels. It will incorporate psychoanalytic perspectives on trauma, along with post-structural and post-colonial theories, to examine the depiction of profound experiences. Qualitative research methods will be employed in this study, ensuring an approach that is both analytical and thorough. The research will draw upon a mix of primary and secondary sources for its analysis.

The foundational texts for this study consist of *'An Atlas of Impossible Longing' (2008), 'The Folded Earth' (2011), 'Sleeping on Jupiter' (2015), 'All the Lives We Never Lived' (2018), and 'The Earthspinner' (2021)*. Complementing these primary resources, the research will also draw upon a diverse range of pertinent secondary materials such as books, academic journals, articles, dissertations, theses, and various relevant researches.

Research Coverage

The proposed research work will cover a comprehensive study, analysis, and evaluation of the selected novels namely '*An Atlas of Impossible Longing'(2008), 'The Folded Earth'(2011), ' Sleeping on Jupiter'(2015), 'All the Lives We Never Lived'(2018) and 'The Earthspinner'(2021)* by Anuradha Roy. Roy establishes a new dimension of representations by examining manifestations of complex and prolonged experiences of trauma occurring in the lives of particular characters and how such representations are facilitated. In addition, the attempt will also be made to discover how despite the inner trauma and sufferings the characters evolve in modern times. The proposed research will explore how each narrative reveals problematic aspects of the different plural voices with the established category of trauma.

Contribution to the Field

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a common and disabling mental disorder that includes substantial social costs to societies worldwide. A consistent finding in the research literature on PTSD is that women exhibit twice the rate of disorder as men, despite men experiencing greater lifetime exposure to traumatic events. Gender-based violence constituting rape and other forms of sexual assault and stalking represents a domain that may account in part for the gender disparity in PTSD. The gendering of trauma continues to be a silenced space. There is a need to highlight and acknowledge the gendered nature of suffering which seeks trauma to be understood in context and not as an isolated act or occurrence affecting the individual. Women have remained, and in many ways continue to remain silenced with minimal opportunities to name the world for themselves. The research will seek to provide a critical analysis of the notion of trauma (and its intersection with gender) that arises from conflict and post-conflict situations.

Structure of the Research Work

1. **Introduction: Exploring Gender and Trauma in Indian English Literature through the Lens of Anuradha Roy's Novels**

The first chapter will provide the background of the major theories concerning Gender and Trauma, with a particular emphasis on Indian English literature. This section will establish the groundwork for exploring the intricate interplay of gender and trauma within the narrative landscape of Indian English fiction.

2. Existential Conflict: Depiction of Isolation, Belongingness, and Trauma in Gender-Constrained Narratives

The second chapter will explore the confinement of women within specific gender roles as depicted in the novels discussed previously. It will examine how these defined gender boundaries contribute to the development of internal trauma in the characters, delving into the mechanisms through which gender norms influence psychological distress. It will delve into the works of Anuradha Roy, examining her five novels to dissect how they articulate the psychological dynamics of their characters.

3. Plural Voices: Gender Binary and Authenticity

Chapter three will discuss the multifaceted impact of the gender binary on individuals of all genders, with a particular focus on amplifying plural voices, including the experiences of childhood trauma. Additionally, it will examine the struggle between one's authentic self and the societal pressures of conforming to stereotypical expectations.

4. Gender Trauma: A Case Study of Characters in Major Novels of Anuradha Roy

Chapter four will explore the psychological turmoil experienced by characters grappling with trauma, examining how their search for identity serves to navigate and ultimately transcend the confines of their traumatic experiences.

5. Conclusion: Unveiling Silenced Voices and Paths to Healing

The concluding section will reflect on the gendered dimensions of trauma depicted in the novels, scrutinize characters' reactions, explore potential paths of overcoming trauma, and ultimately summarize our findings.

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